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THE SUPREME LESSON WHICH CHRIST CAME TO TEACH WAS THAT NO MAN LIVETH TO HIMSELF: THAT THE STRONG OUGHT TO BEAR THE BURDENS OF THE WEAK

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WHAT CAN JESUS CHRIST DO WITH ME

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What Can Jesus Christ Do With Me

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FOREWORD

OF the many preachers and lecturers who come and go at Harvard University during the collegiate year, no one is more sure of a warm welcome and a more appreciative hearing than is Dr. Wilfred T. Grenfell, the Labrador missionary physician. Two of his addresses in recent years stand out with peculiar distinctness. One undertook to answer the question: What Will You Do With Jesus Christ? This was published in book form not long after its delivery. A year later in

the same place Dr. Grenfell reversed his earlier question and asked his auditors to consider: What Can Jesus Christ Do With Me? This second address is now given to the public in a little volume which may serve as a companion to its predecessor.

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So marvelous and so undeniable is still the influence of Jesus in modern life that even men who start to criticize the accounts we have of the Master almost always end up in a sort of vague suspicion that in reality it is they who are standing at his judgment bar. That is a far more important question — What does he think of us? — than, What do we think of him? — The honest student of the

records of his life must acknowledge that Jesus' opinion of us would be formed on what we were willing to let him do with us.

Some are surprised that a surgeon, who sees death so often and has forced upon him the inevitableness of it, is still always more deeply interested in the things which have to do with the brief time we spend on earth than with the prospects of what will happen to us in the eternity beyond.

But to us it is a wonder that those who are so deeply concerned with a future of which they can know so little should, in the face of the teach-

ings of the Master whom they profess to follow, attach such slight importance to the only section of life they are sure they can influence; for I presume I am addressing myself to those who consider that the ability to influence another man's destiny when you can no longer reach him through the medium of his body is at least problematical. The condition of the body through which the soul now interprets itself must be as material to its welfare as the ancients thought it. To us it seems natural to insist that the body and the mind receive at least equal attention with the soul. To me the

beauty of all the Master's teachings is their plain common sense.

All through Christ's teachings the only class of men to be cast out of his Kingdom are "the unprofitable." He that defileth is only a subdivision of the first class and "he shall not enter." If "the unprofitable" has to go there is no chance "for him that maketh a lie."

What is more natural than that that which is no use should be dropped out? The process involves no unreasonable fury or insensate wrath. It is what happens everywhere. There is not a hospital anywhere without its

once expensive instruments which are now discarded as useless. They will probably go into the fire and no sensible man would wish to prevent it, though all good and wise folk will deplore the waste. When a man, for such a reason, is dropped from the football team, it is the man himself who has most to regret. If it is his own fault few will be sorry for him. But the whole team will be forced to deplore the fault which caused it, for that means their loss.

Now in every man who is worthy of the name there is an innate sense of debt to life. To claim that all good

work is done for personal gain is not tenable, and it is not true. Every man who has sense enough to look about him can plainly see the doom of the man who has said, "I will contribute nothing to the work of the world." He is as big a fool today as ever who says, "I have much goods, I will eat and be merry."

In the heart of every true man is the conviction, "I must do something." Today we force even the multi-millionaire to give his children a preparation, at any rate, which will fit them to pay this debt — a debt which no gold and silver can discharge. Yet there

is considerable danger. The Master taught that "the rich" will find most difficulty in this matter. He also taught that the possession of five talents will make a man more effective than if he have one, but he gave one concrete example in which he declared that unless the young man got rid of his material burden he could not expect to pay the real debt that life calls for. You cannot hope to be successful on the track if you weight your pockets. All weights must be laid aside if we are to win in the race of life.

It is nowhere more clearly recognized than in a university that we are

all indebted to life. There every one is expected to do more than pay his bills and pass his examinations. He is looked to by all to bring honor to his Alma Mater. It makes little difference how — whether on the athletic field or in the intellectual arena, or even better perhaps in the humbler routine of fidelity to a more heroic duty, such as supporting a relative while working through college. Whichever it is, the fact remains that the debt is acknowledged. If I were to contend here that it does not really matter two straws whether you make good in life or not so long as you do not

make the penitentiary or the poor-house, without question you would think me a lunatic. This house, these seats, your presence, all give the lie to such a proposition. You cannot deny it, you do owe a debt to life; you must make good. There is no need to prove this problem, it is a matter of faith. But it is so deeply rooted in the consciousness of mankind that it is not less proved than that I exist.

Most of us fully acknowledge our debt to life. But on the other hand we submit all too easily to trying to pay the claim made on us by what is known as "Society." No sacrifice seems too

great — the dictates of common sense must receive no attention — the willing martyrs to its demands are innumerable. But for the most part, these devotees are unconscious of their slavery and of the price they pay. It is only when appeal is made to the will to break loose from conventions that doubts as to whether we really ought to pay begin to trouble us. We want to know with our brains; we want to distrust the monitor in our hearts. But both faith and experience are needed to make knowledge.

It is only the very young who expect to get through life without axioms; it

is only the dull and ignorant who have adequate explanations for everything. It is only the insane who are never troubled with doubts as to the capacity of their brains to grasp "the Riddle of the Universe."

The real question is, "Are you willing to pay?" and if so, "How are you going to pay — in what coin?" It was the commonest question which they brought to the Master in his day. "What must I do?" It was a question which he always treated as of vital importance, and as relating to everyday life. Those who had done wrong he told to make it good. To

the teachers and rulers he said, "The debt you owe is to extend justice and mercy, to show faith and love." They did not like to be told of their debt any more than we do, much less to have it specified in terms which they understood so plainly, and therefore had no excuse for evading. John the Baptist followed the same principle. To the soldiers he said, "Don't be violent; don't accuse falsely; be content; obey." (Which means, be good soldiers.) To government officials he taught, "Take only what is due to you," which means, "Don't graft." In the same spirit St. Paul said that you owe a debt to your

body. "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the holy Spirit? Shall ye make it the member of a harlot?" That there is a debt to the body he makes very plain. It is simple and within the reach of all of us to pay it. It is just to keep it pure and fit. We surgeons look upon this as an undoubted religious duty.

Perhaps you have been mistaken in your idea of what the Master does require of you. Will you not consider the matter again in the light of what he really does ask? Some of us have not read the Scriptures in the common-sense spirit of Christ himself, and so

we have missed finding that which would have been the word of eternal life to us. To whom else has it ever been said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life"?

Repeated experience has convinced me that the feeblest men can endure when "seeing him who is invisible." It was in no transcendental sense that Jesus said, "Without me you can do nothing." He taught that his presence gives men a power which enables them to do things. When he was asked by a lawyer, "What must I do?" he answered, "Thou shalt love." One might

suppose that this is the one thing beyond our control. But the strength of the Master's teachings is that they are all positive, all constructive. He told us all not to pass judgment on those who differ from us in faith.

Again, experience verifies the fact that if a man is willing really to seek to have the Christ make something out of him, he will find he can love in a practical way — even if it is but an imperfect reflection of the way in which the Master loved. Perhaps that is why the only other thing the Master asked men to do when he was leaving them was something which would

bring him to their remembrance, something which would make more real to them the fact that he was ever with them.

But the supreme lesson which Christ came to teach was that no man liveth to himself; that we strong ought to bear the burdens of the weak. If there is yet one higher joy than that of paying the debt we owe, surely it is that of paying for others their debt which we do not owe. Alone of all great teachers he came to add this to the beauty, dignity, and joy which this brief life affords us. Christ offers this supreme possibility to you — even

so far you may have the joy of walking in his footsteps. I venture to repeat that if you are not at heart convinced that Jesus was all he claimed to be, the paying of the debt of others will insure you peace of mind on that question. Honor and lasting joy will come to you only as you pay, and in proportion to the amount the payment costs you.

The winner of a "walkover" can scarcely be considered a hero. A boy told me yesterday that he had won his first tie in a contest, but the victory lost its zest when I learned that his adversary had "scratched." Sir Walter

Scott's books were once widely read, and he was admired for them. Now fewer people read him, but those who know how uncomplainingly and how nobly he toiled to pay off debts which, through his misfortune, nearly overwhelmed him in his old age, love him for that reason. It is only character which lives; that is why the Master is the Master still. He was only a common working-man. The learned and the great of the world rejected him. He met death in his youth, a crucified outcast. But he rose again, and he lives today and for all time. Will you not ask him what he can do with you?

Heavenly Father, To all thy many gifts
to us, add, we pray thee, the hon-
est desire, in thy spirit, to pay
to the utmost our debt
to life, and so enable
us ever to do the
thing that
pleases
thee.

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